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ABSTRACT

The social context in which the teacher and children are mutually engaged in written language is examined to explain the teacher's use of sociocultural, sociopsycholinguistic,and sociopolitical knowledge bases. An explanation of the psychogenetic theory of the alphabetic writing system is offered, and one bilingual whole language first grade classroom's literacy and biliteracy sociopsychogenesis is analyzed. The findings reported here are based on preliminary analyses of bilingual children's literacy and cognitive development in the social context of interactive dialogue journals. The database includes monthly (September-May) samples of 30 children's bilingual journal entries (270 pieces of written text). It is shown how first-grade bilingual 5 to 6-year-olds engage in the social-cultural process of recreating knowledge about the alphabetic writing system in both Spanish and English. It is noted that, by April and May, all 30 children use the alphabetic writing system and their conventional spelling exceeds their invented spelling. Many apply their alphabetic knowledge from their first language without instruction. It is suggested that language minority children may do better when teachers abandon traditional beliefs, practices, and low expectations. Twenty-four journal samples are presented. Contains 29 references. (LB)

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CHILDREN'S SOCIOPSYCHOGENESIS OF LITERACY AND BILITERACY

Barbara M. Flores

INTRODUCTION

Within the last decade our knowledge about how children come to know written language has revolutionized our thinking. The intellectual traditions that have been pivotal are primarily the sociopsycholinguistic (Goodman & Goodman, 1976, 1978, 1981; Goodman, Y. & Altwerger, 1981; Goodman, Y., 1984, 1985, 1986; Halliday, 1975, 1978; and Smith, 1975, 1978, 1984, 1986); sociocultural (Vygotsky, 1962, 1978; Diaz, Moll, & Mehan, 1984; Moll & Diaz, 1981; Cole & Scribner, 1980); psychogenetic (Ferreiro & Teberosky, 1979, 1982; Ferreiro et al., 1982; Ferreiro, 1984, 1986); and sociopolitical (Freire, 1970, 1973, 1986) paradigms. These four intellectual traditions have given us (whole language teachers, teacher educators, researchers, teacher/researchers, administrators, and parents) the knowledge to revalue, reorganize, facilitate, deliberately guide, monitor, and document our children's literacy and biliteracy acquisition.

In the last six years, we (author and bilingual teachers) have participated in evolving our understanding and shifting our paradigms about how children come to know written language based on the Goodmans' sociopsycholinguistic theory about literacy; Halliday's social semeiotic theory of language development; Vygotsky's social historical theory of the social construction of knowledge; and Ferreiro's and Teberosky's evolving and grounded psychogenetic theory about written language. Most importantly, Freire's (1970) social political philosophy of learning and teaching has advanced the reorganization and paradigm shift from a "transfer of knowledge" pedagogy to a more empowering pedagogy.

Our findings, not only of one particular classroom but of many others whose detailed analyses have yet to be done confirm these theoretical and research paradigms in the praxis of daily uses of oral and written language for genuine purposes within authentic social contexts (Freire, 1970) in school. The praxis of these theories in action and actions guided by theory has significant pedagogical implications for the learning and teaching of literacy and biliteracy that are revolutionary.

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Purpose

This paper will present (a) a discussion of the social context in which the teacher and children are mutually engaged, which explains the sociocultural, sociopsycholinguistic, and sociopolitical knowledge bases that the teacher uses; (b) an explanation of the psychogenetic theory of the alphabetic writing system; and (c) the interpretive analysis of one bilingual whole language first grade's literacy and biliteracy sociopsychogenesis. This particular bilingual whole language teacher implemented the praxis of theory in action from the intellectual traditions of the four paradigms are generated, through appropriation, new knowledge about how bilingual children learn the alphabetic languages of Spanish and English in a schooling context.

The findings presented here are based on preliminary analyses of these bilingual children's literacy learning and cognitive development in the social context of interactive dialogue journals. Our longitudinal data base includes monthly samples (September through May) of 30 children's interactive journal entries (270 pieces of written text). We will demonstrate how first grade bilingual five- and six-year-olds engage in the social-cultural process of recreating knowledge (Shor & Freire, 1986) about the alphabetic writing system in both Spanish and English.

Social Context

In this particular whole language bilingual classroom, language (oral and written or first or second) is used for authentic communication (Flores & Garcia, 1984; Stanton, 1984; Edelsky & Draper, 1986; Edelsky, 1986) within social contexts. One particular authentic use of written language is entered in daily interactive dialogue journals. In this particular whole language classroom, interactive dialogue journals are used principally for personal communication between the teacher and each child. Each day every child is expected to choose a topic and write an entry in his/her journal. The child can share feelings, opinions, likes and dislikes, experiences, dreams, etc. Each child may also choose to draw an illustration as well. When the child is finished, he/she reads the entry to the teacher as the teacher may not yet be able to read the child's symbolic representation of meaning. The child, in turn, also mediates his/her meaning of the written text by using both illustration and oral language.

This social semeiotic (Halliday, 1978; Vygotsky, 1978) involves the use of multiple sign systems that are routinely used and orchestrated by children and teachers in bilingual whole language classrooms. After the child has mediated his/her message, the teacher responds both orally and in written form with a genuine commentary about the topic or meaning the child has conveyed. As the teacher (the expert user of the alphabetic writing system) is writing, she/he is not only mediating meaning by reading aloud as he/she writes but is also

demonstrating knowledge about the alphabetic writing system to the child (a novice user of the alphabetic writing system). Simultaneously the teacher is deliberately creating a zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978).

During this communicative encounter, the child, in turn, is observing, with his/her current conceptual interpretation of written language, the teacher in the process of generating, using, and transacting with all the cuing systems: pragmatic, semantic, syntactic, graphophonemic, and orthographic (Goodman, 1984; Carey,1980). The interactive dialogue journal initially appears to be an "assigned" task; it soon becomes an authentically shared communication between the children and the teacher. The children at first do not understand that it's okay to write their way, but with repeated encouragement and consistent, genuine responses, they come to accept and participate in this communicative encounter. This tenor (Halliday, 1978) allows the child to experiment, to play, to take risks, and most importantly to make hypotheses. Through experimenting, taking risks, and making hypotheses, the children use language as a means in the social construction and recreation of knowledge, specifically written language.

The child's and teacher's goal is for the child to learn the adult's alphabetic interpretation, but with the understanding that the child's evolving conceptual interpretations are legitimate displays and uses of knowledge about the writing systems of Spanish and English. By using multiple sign systems, both teacher and child are able to value each other's knowledge of written language. More importantly the child knows that it's okay to write his/her way because he/she is not yet able to write as adults do, but some day will be able to do so. Also, by initially constructing the social context in this particular way, the teacher organizes for the social construction of knowledge by mediating and by deliberating setting up zones of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978).

The social organization (the social contexts) for learning and teaching literacy and biliteracy is the most crucial underpinning for facilitating the children's coming to learn the alphabetic writing system in Spanish and English. Without this understanding and social political praxis, literacy teaching would remain the same "transfer of knowledge" pedagogy (Freire, 1987) that is the status quo throughout the United States. In this particular bilingual whole language classroom, literacy learning and teaching take a dramatic paradigm shift away from the status quo. By status quo, we mean the teaching of literacy and biliteracy in isolated and meaningless bits and parts. Freire (1970) calls this "banking education," whereby the teacher is the holder of all knowledge and the children are the passive receptacles. In a whole language classroom the teacher is no longer the sole holder of knowledge. In contrast, the children are actively engaged in the social construction of knowledge by using it for authentic purposes (Freire, 1970).

The Psychogenesis of Literacy

Ferreiro and Teberosky (1975) have been grounding a psychogenetic theory of Spanish-speaking children's evolution of knowledge about written language. This knowledge about how children learn the alphabetic writing system is very key in monitoring, facilitating, and documenting the children's evolution of knowledge. This psychogenetic knowledge along with the sociocultural and sociopsycholinguistic knowledge gives the teacher the necessary tools and understanding to teach literacy and biliteracy to bilingual children more successfully than when the teacher used the status quo literacy curriculum. Additionally, it is the praxis (Freire, 1970,1975, 1986) of these theoretical frameworks that creates the social political context for a pedagogy of empowerment.

Ferreiro, et al. (1982) and Ferreiro and Teberosky (1979, 1982) delineate four possible conceptual interpretations or writing systems that the children may use. At one time, they called them "niveles" or levels that were psychogenetically ordered (i.e., children would progress from a presyllabic conceptual interpretation to a syllabic one). Then from the syllabic interpretation, they would evolve to a syllabic/alphabetic one. Finally, they would use an alphabetic conceptual interpretation of Spanish which approximates the adult cultural expectation. These four conceptual interpretations were categorized into four writing systems: presyllabic, syllabic, syllabic-alphabetic, and alphabetic. However, Ferreiro (1986) has now collapsed the evolutionary progression into three major periods.

Initially Ferreiro and Teberosky (1979 & 1982) had posited that children between the ages of four and six would progress through this psychogenetic order. However, our data demonstrate, as well as the work of Ferreiro and Gomez Palacio (1982), that children between five and seven years old may not necessarily progress in this psychogenetic order. Our data suggest that most but not all children progress in this order. For example, we found instances in which (a) children may be using all four conceptual interpretations in one journal entry; (b) children might be using the presyllabic interpretation one day and then the very next day use the alphabetic conceptual interpretation; or (c) children may perhaps use the alphabetic system sporadically one day and then retreat to using the syllabic writing system exclusively the next few days or weeks. They might also stay in one of the writing systems until they were challenged or deliberately put in disarray. During this collective, but individual act of daily interpersonal communication (e.g., during journal time), we have also observed that all the children share knowledge about the writing systems. Thus, another interactive situation for the social construction of knowledge has been cocreated and cosustained.

Before explaining and demonstrating the three phases or periods that Ferreiro (1986) has proposed, we want to emphasize that without actually engaging in the act of interactive journal writing as described above, one cannot really understand or appreciate the complexity of thought-in-action that the children

are experiencing. Also, without actually seeing and interpreting the children's written representation of meaning in the act, one cannot value the enormous amount of knowledge that children already have about written language before schooling.

During the first period, the children are engaged in the presyllabic writing system (i.e., they begin to use symbols that approximate our adult symbols — letters). However, prior to this stage, the children have been engaged in drawing. And in the drawing the symbols take the shape of the contours of the object whereas in written languages the characteristics are arbitrariness and linearity (Ferreiro, 1986). Once the children begin to make this distinction between drawing and writing, we begin to see "strings" of letters. But they are more than "strings" of letters. According to Ferreiro (1986) this is a major breakthrough for the children.

According to Ferreiro (1986, p. 5), in the "second period" of development the children are engaged in "the construction of modes of differentiation between pieces of writing through a progressive control over the qualitative and quantitative variations" of written language.

> The children are not yet analyzing sound patterns of the word, but are working with the linguistic symbols as a totality (meaning+sounds). One hypothesis that they are testing is: Are the variations in the amount of letters related to variation of quantifiable aspects of the referred object? That is, does one represent the object with more letters because it is big and with fewer letters because it is small? or more letters for a group of objects and less letters for a single one? or more letters for an older person and fewer for a child? etc. (Ferreiro, 1986, p. 5)

The children are also establishing a maximum and minimum number of letters for nouns, reports Ferreiro. The children usually maintain "a minimum of at least three letters but no more than seven or eight." We have also observed this in our English and Spanish-speaking children in the Southwestern United States.

During the last period, Ferreiro (1986) reports that the children engage in a "phonetization of the written representation." The three distinct areas for Spanish-speaking children are a syllabic period, a transition period (syllabic/alphabetic), and an alphabetic period. It appears that Ferreiro (1986) is now

demarcating the children's evolution of their conceptual interpretations of written language based on the children's macrodistinctions (e.g., in the last period); the use of oral language (phonetization) with written language is a major consideration, whereas, for the first period it is the distinction between drawing and writing. For the second period it is the child's major distinction between "pieces of writing through a progressive control over the qualitative and quantitative variations."

> From a cognitive point of view, the syllabic period represents the first attempt to deal with a very important and general problem: the relationship between the whole (a written string) and the constituent parts (the letters themselves). The ordered parts of the word (its syllables) are put in a one-to-one correspondence with the ordered parts of the written string (its letters) (Ferreiro, 1986, p. 7).

With our children, we have observed that initially during the syllabic period the children usually use one arbitrary letter for a syllable consistently. However, we have found that if we are not present when the child is generating the written text, we might mistake the written text for a mere "string of letters." At other times, the same children who represented their "written string" with no attention to sound/letter qualities may indeed begin to use some sound/letter correspondence. For example, our Spanish-speaking children may represent "gusta" by writing "ua" or "escritorio" as "eioio." Basically they appear to hear the sound qualities of the vowels and select to represent the "written string" syllabically using more vowels than consonants. With the English-speaking children, we have found that at this syllabic period, they begin to represent their "written string" with more consonants than vowels. For example, we have observed the children using initial consonant sounds for monosyllabic words, such as, "l" for "like", or "m" for "my."

When using a syllabic/alphabetic conceptual interpretation, the children may represent "gusta" as "guta" or "usta." During this transition, the children are still mixing the use of a syllabic representation with an alphabetic one. When the children begin to write alphabetically, they are applying the alphabetic principle that "sound similarities" imply "letter similarities." This need to represent everything that children hear seems to persist until they encounter discrepancies with other printed texts that use standard and conventional orthography.

The following journal entries not only confirm Ferreiro's theoretical claims about Spanish-speaking children's evolution of knowledge about written language but also confirm claims for English-speaking children. The children's acquisition, evolution, and use of knowledge about written language is a very unique cultural invention by the children. These samples are representative of the entire first grade bilingual whole language classroom.

We will include samples that depict each period according to the aforementioned characteristics by presenting case studies of four different children. Although there are many more salient characteristics, it is the macro distinctions for each period that will be highlighted. During the first period, the children have made the distinction between drawing and writing; "the strings of letters" demonstrate the linearity and arbitrariness of writing.

Juan remains in the first period for the first five months of school as demonstrated by his journal samples in September-January. In February he is in the third period, apparently having passed the second period. He remains in the third period until the end of first grade. His refinement of the alphabetic writing system in Spanish is quite evident. In February he is showing the use of the syllabic/alphabetic writing system. By the beginning of March he is almost totally alphabetic. Starting in February we also begin to see Juan's use of conventional orthography (i.e., specifically spelling and punctuation). He writes: "estavam luhano mis hrmanos." [My brothers were playing.] In March, he writes: "Yo fi Para la dul. le Preunte alcoch si Potia agarrar la Pelota." [I went to Dool School. I asked the coach if I could get the ball.] He's still using invented spellings, but he is definitely using the alphabetic writing system.

In April and in May his control of the standard orthography is very apparent because he only invents the English version of "home run" and the Spanish version of "senti." In April he writes: "Yoestaba Jugando beisbol con Luis. Le Pege un hom Ran." [I was playing baseball with Luis. I hit a home run.] His segmentation (standard spacing between words) is not yet conventional, but what is most important to note is that this child figured out the alphabetic writing system by the sixth month of first grade. Remember he had initially been using a "string of letters" to represent his meaning, and in just six months his conceptual interpretation evolved from a presyllabic writing system to a syllabic/alphabetic one (see representations).

Carolina is also a Spanish-speaking child and has a profile similar to that of Juan, although she only stays in the first period for the first two months, September and October. Note that from September to October her repertoire of letters significantly increases. By November, she is using a syllabic/alphabetic representation: "el pavo seFe a la Csa" [the turkey went to the house]. Her December sample is more alphabetic than syllabic, but she is still employing both. "la nina se sento en la Careta. Io soi sanina. [The little girl sat on the road and I am that little girl.] "Careta" is syllabic/alphabetic for "carretera." And, "Io" represents "Yyo"and "sanina" represents "esa nina." She is completely alphabetic by January and throughout the rest of the year. Her only challenge is to learn the standard orthography, but she has certainly accomplished a formidable task — becoming alphabetic. She only differs with Juan in that he used the presyllabic writing system for five months while she

used it for two months. Aside from this difference, they both arrived at the same goal (see representations).

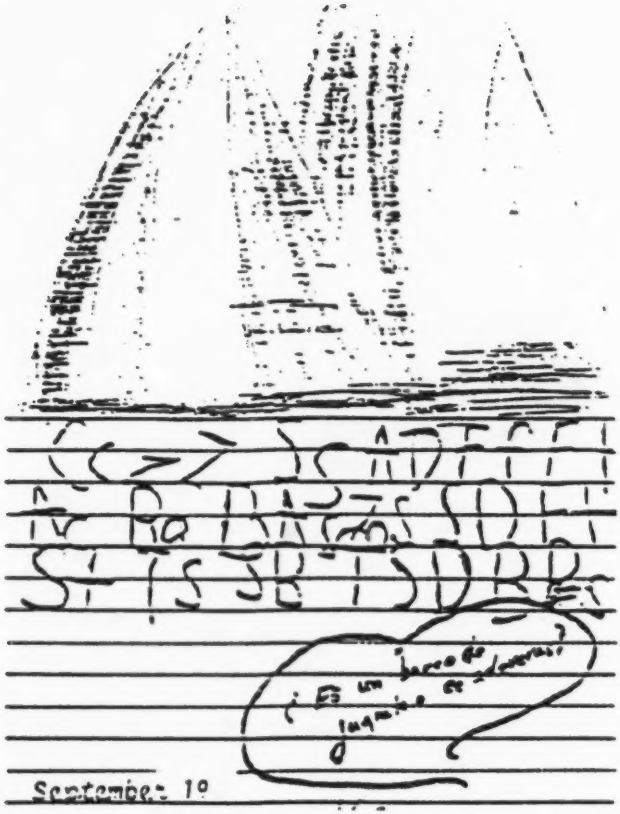
Alfonso is a dominant English speaker and his first journal sample indicates that he is in the third period. His first entry was: "IHSME." [I went swimming.] He is definitely using the syllabic writing system because "I" stands for "I", "H" stands for "went" and "SME" stands for "swimming." In his October sample we see the beginning of the alphabetic system in "mue" [movie]. He writes: "ISED MUE D FT D TE." [I saw the movie the Friday the Thirteen.] By the end of November, he is still in the third period using the alphabetic principle; "Last nit I so Banana Man. The aPl had A bOM." [Last night I saw Banana Man. The apple had a bomb.] April's and May's samples show that he definitely became alphabetic and also learned standard orthography (see representations).

Jose is an English-speaking child. His first journal entry demonstrates that he is in the first period (i.e., he is using "strings of letters" to represent his meaning). At the end of September, Jose is in the third period; "PDUITI" means [Did you see Nickolodeon]. He is using the syllabic writing system. In October he writes "JASE" [JAWS]. In November and December he uses the syllabic/alphabetic writing system. From January until the end of school, he uses the alphabetic writing system. Jose differs from Alfonso only in that he does not use the alphabetic writing system until January. However, in the end he has reached the same goal as Alfonso and his Spanish-speaking counterparts. In January he writes, "The grl IS Sad BcZ She IS A CLWN" [The girl is sad because she is a clown]. He is using invented spellings which indicate he now has the formidable task of learning standard spelling (see representations).

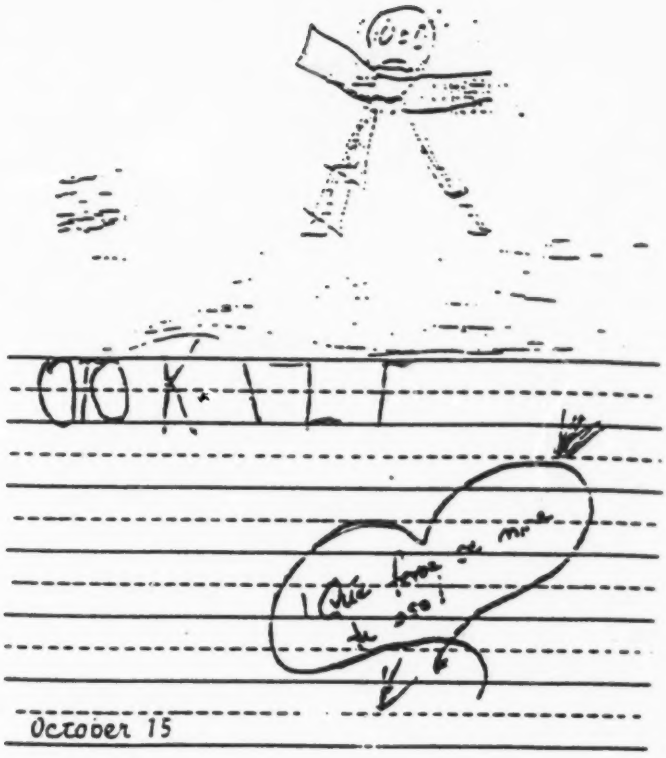
All of these profiles serve to illustrate the variety among the children's evolution of knowledge regarding written language in both Spanish and English. Even though they all have different degrees of use and stability in their evolutionary processes and social construction of knowledge, they all reached the same goal — becoming alphabetic by the end of first grade. These children were selected to show the variety within the stable "periods" of psychogenesis.

Interpretative Analysis

The following scattergram (Figure 10) depicts thirty first grade bilingual children coming to know written language across the entire school year, 1985-1986. Monthly samples from one literacy encounter (interactive dialogue journals) were selected randomly if the child did not show any major movement between writing systems; however, if during the month a child showed marked movement, then that particular piece was deliberately selected.



Juan - September 19



Juan - October 15

11

Juan - November 13

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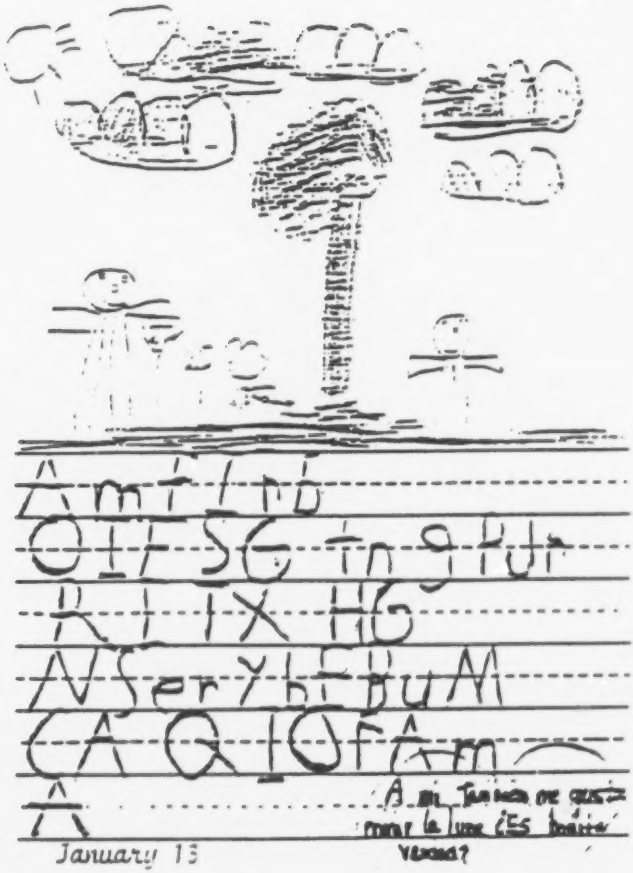
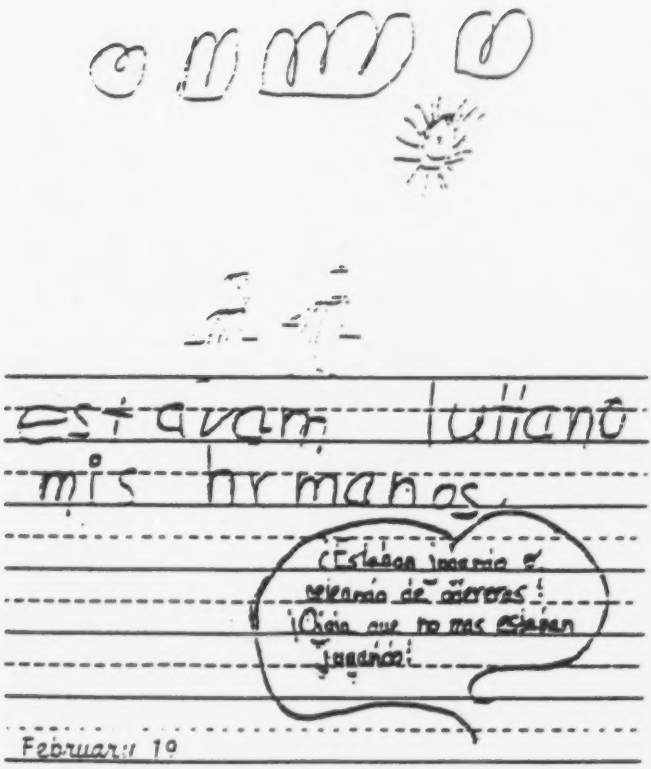
Juan - December 20



Juan - January 13



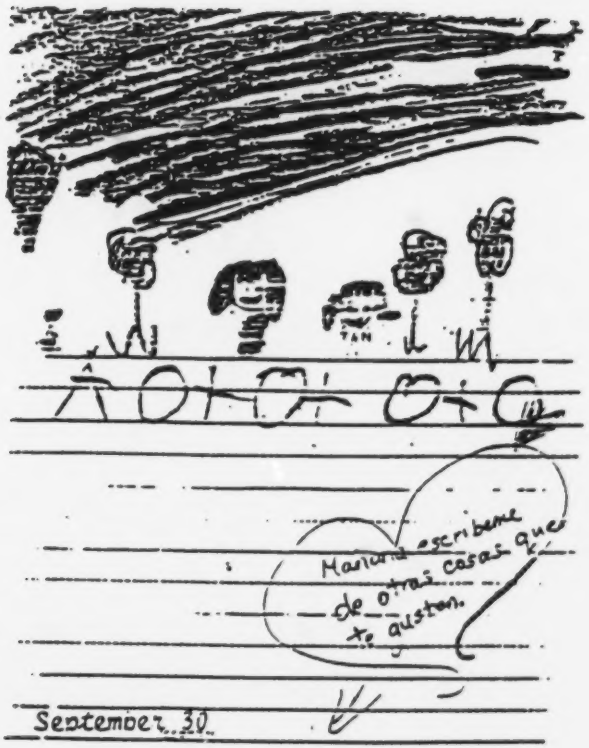
Juan - February 19

15

Yo fi para la dul.
le preunte al Och
si pofia agarrar
la peloTa
March 5
¿Y fe la gresta?
¿A qué Jagaste con la pelota?

Juan - March 5

Juan - April 14



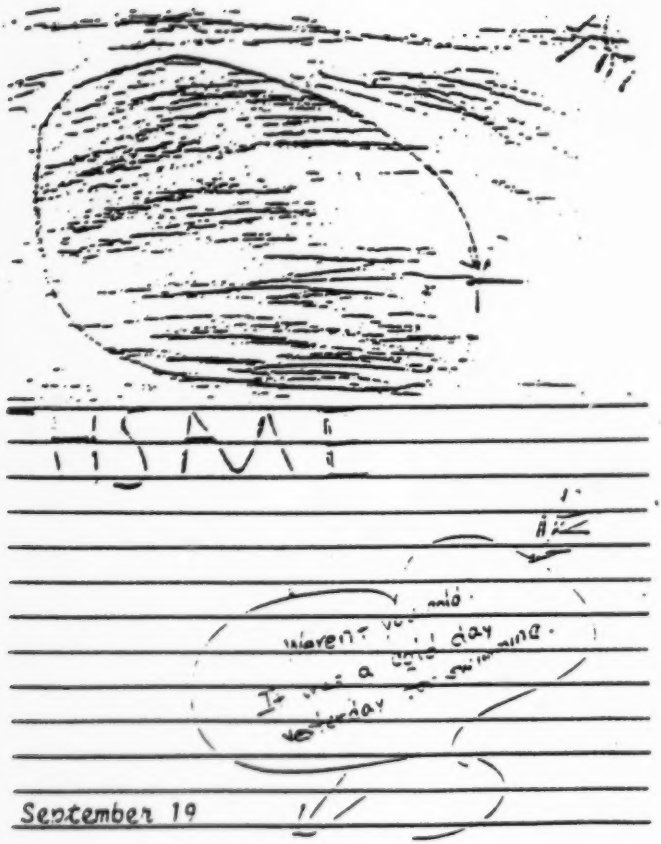
Carolina - September 30

Carolina - October 30

Carolina - November 30

Carolina - December 4

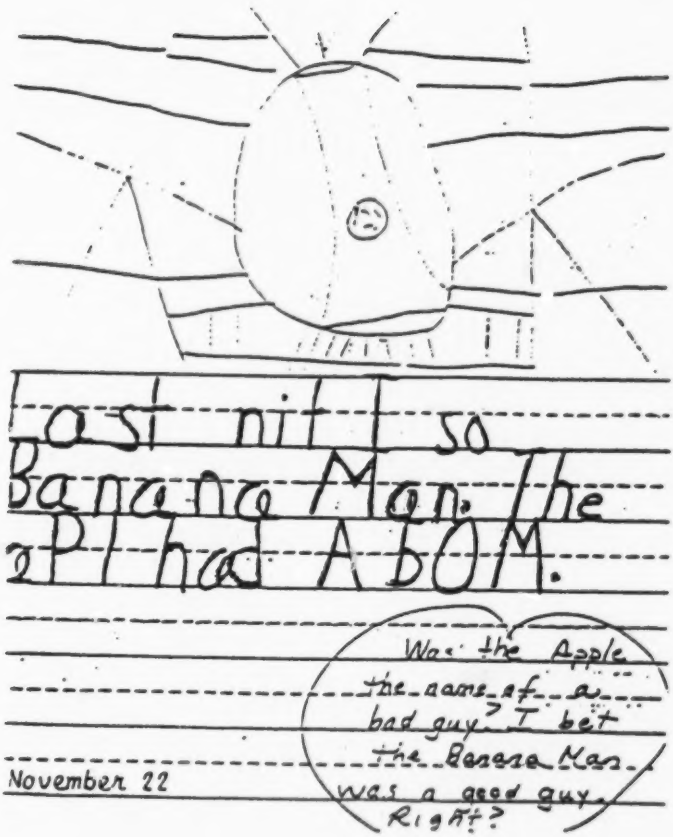
Carolina - January 9



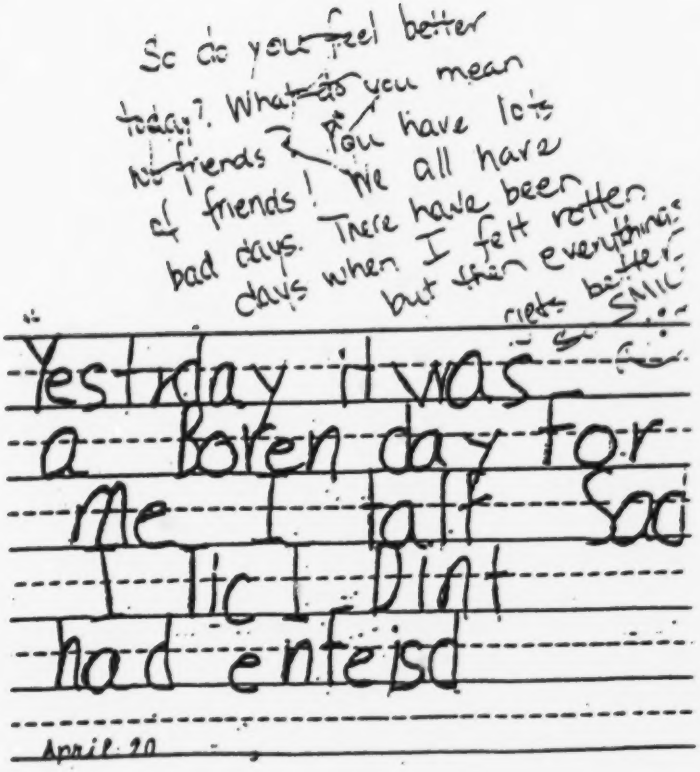
Alfonso - September 19

23

Alfonso - October 8



Alfonso - November 22


So do you feel better today? What do you mean no friends? You have lots of friends! We all have bad days. There have been days when I felt rotten but then everything gets better. SMILE
Yestrday it was a boren day for me I taf Sad I ltc I Dint had enfeid
April 20

Alfonso - April 20

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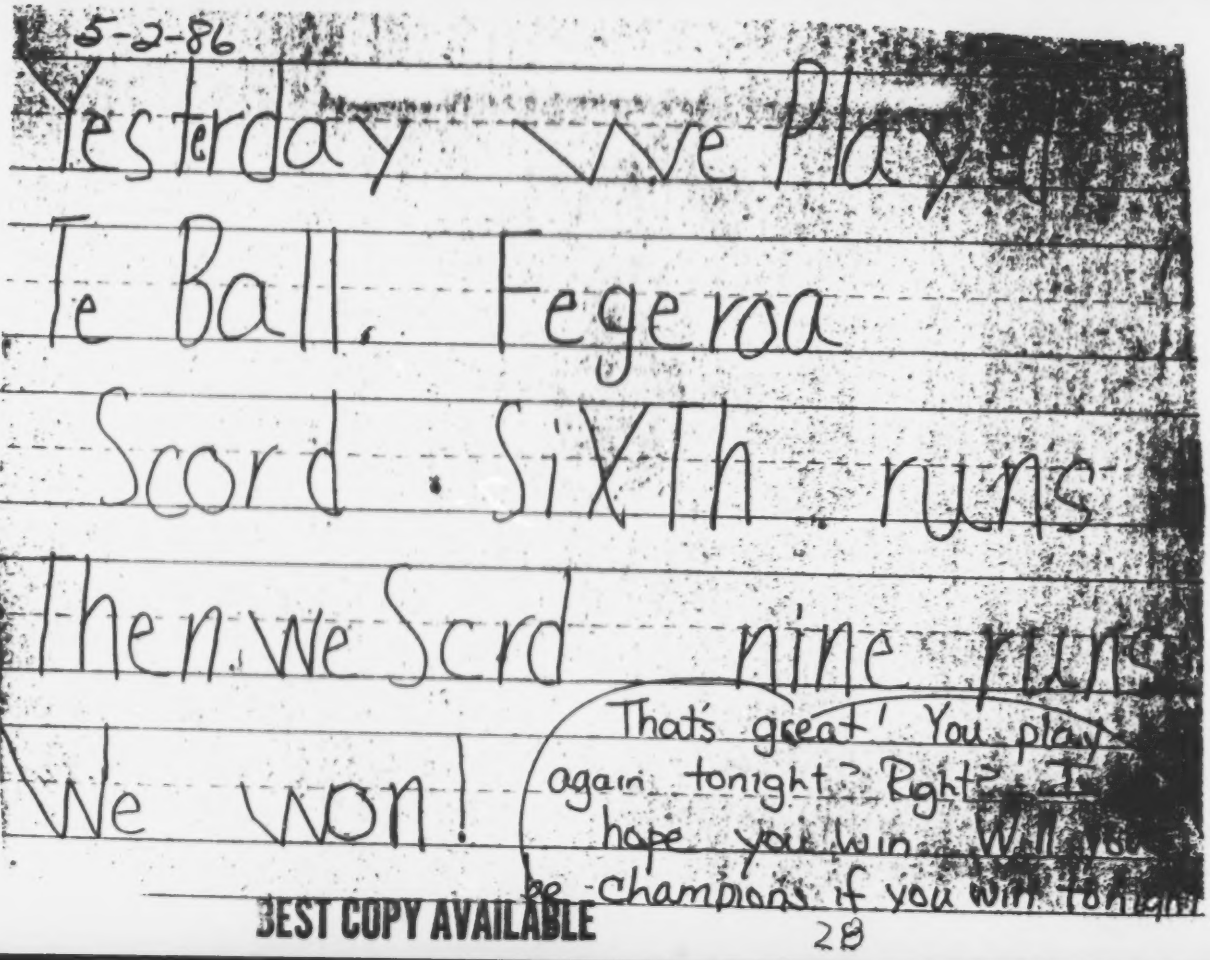
Alfonso - May 2



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Jose - September 9

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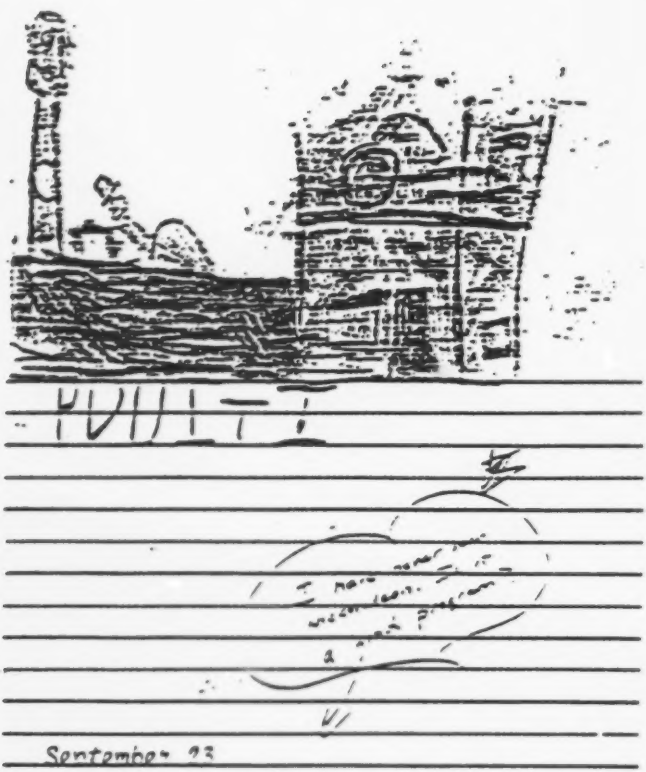
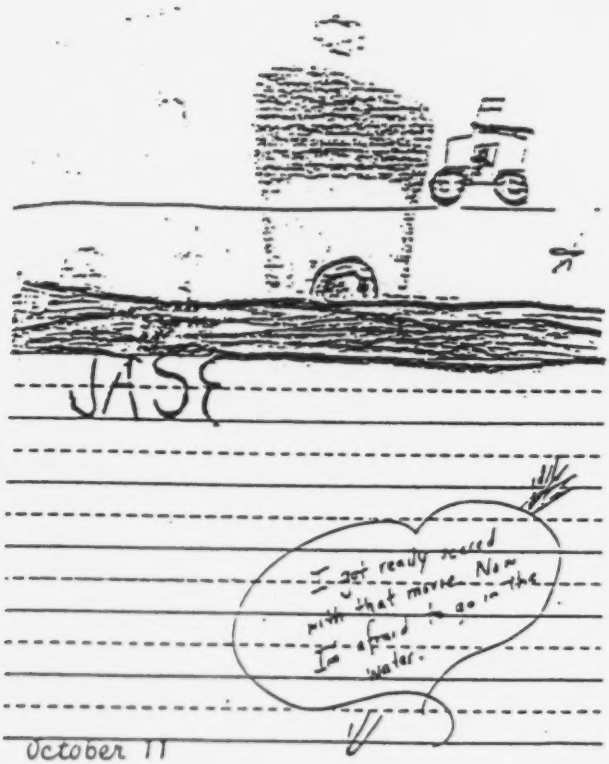
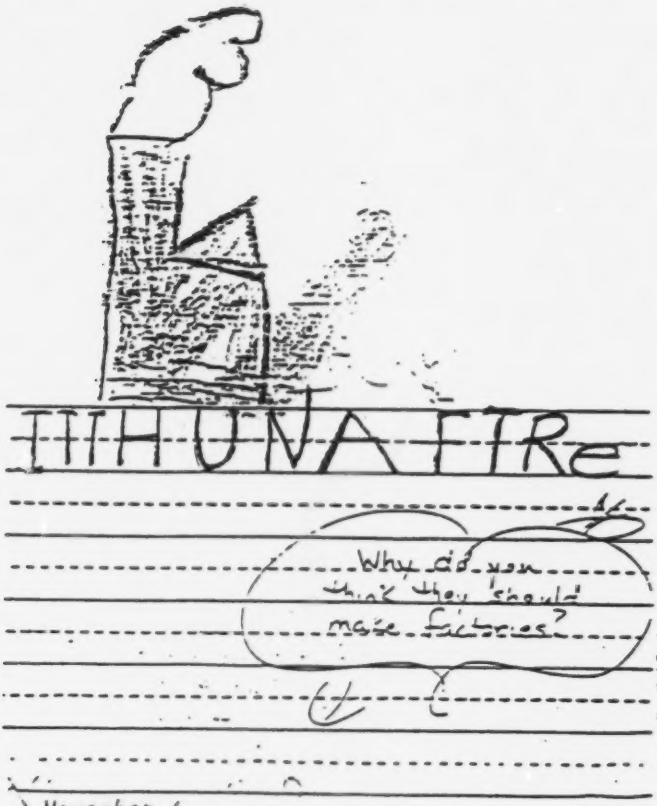


Jose - September 23

30



Jose - October 11

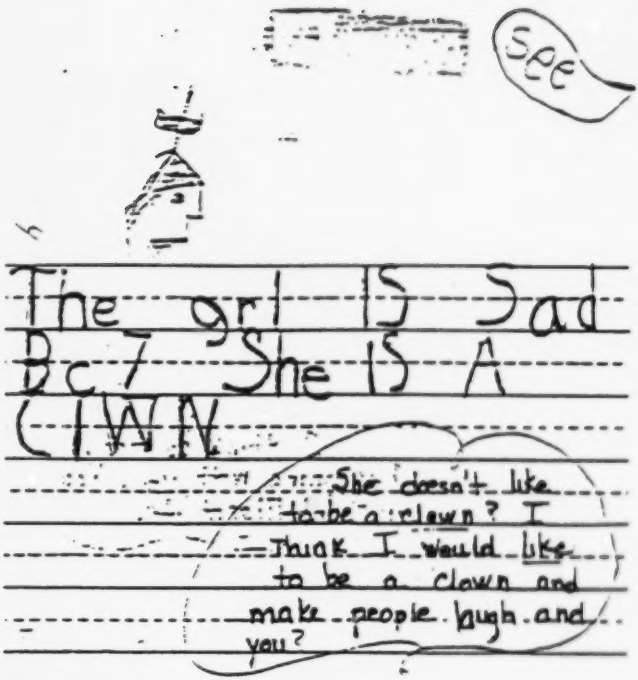


Jose - November 7

32

December 5

Jose - December 5



January 13

Jose - January 13

34

Coming to Know the Aphabetic Writing System in Spanish and English: Thirty Bilingual Children's Evaluation of Knowledge During 1985-986

Spanish Dominant ▪
English Dominant *

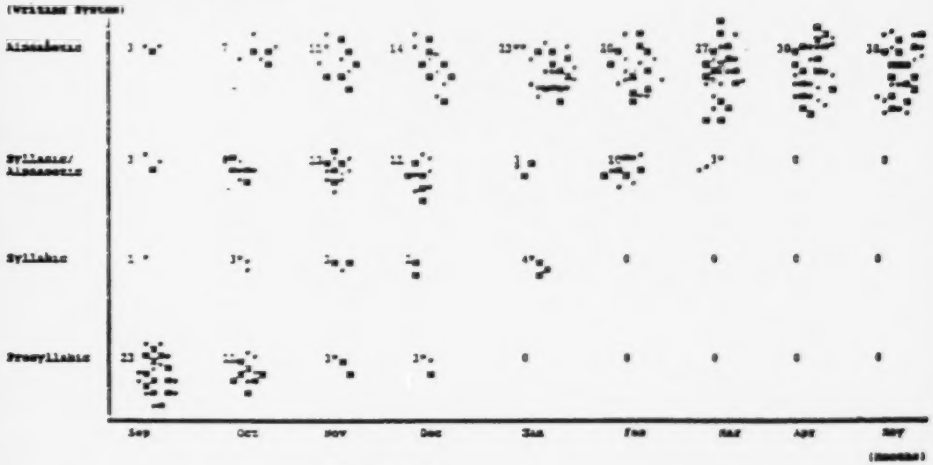


Figure 10

S. Flores/E. Anderson - Arizona State University:041987

This was neither an experimental study nor an ethnographic study. This particular "study" is based on teachers' needs to know about how children progressed on a monthly basis in the evolution of their knowledge about written language in just one literacy encounter within school. If it were called any kind of a study, it would more appropriately be called an "action research" learning and teaching experience (Stenhouse, 1974).

The squares depict the children that are Spanish dominant whereas the asterisks depict the English dominant counterparts. The fact that not many children used the syllabic writing system should be reconsidered because we were not present at all times when the children were producing the written text. Some of the children that appeared to be using "strings of letters" may have been engaged in syllabically representing meaning (refer to Figure 10)

At a glance, the reader can see that the thirty children made significant progress from September to May. At the beginning of September, twenty-three children were using the presyllabic writing system. Of the twenty-three, nine were English-speaking children and the other fourteen, Spanish speaking. Three children (two English speaking and one Spanish speaking) were using the alphabetic writing system. Only one English speaking child was using the syllabic writing system whereas the other remaining three children (two English-speaking and one Spanish-speaking) were using the syllabic/alphabetic writing systems.

In October, the children's progress was remarkable. Twelve children who had previously been using the presyllabic writing system in September began using different writing systems as evidenced by the increase in the other possible writing systems. For example, seven children, four English speaking (ES) and three Spanish speaking (SS), were using the syllabic/alphabetic writing system as compared to only three the previous month. And three English-speaking children rather than one in September were now using the syllabic writing system.

This variation in a matter of one month's time is extraordinary given that the teacher had only one month of experience in the praxis of this new pedagogy. However, this does not mean that the teacher had a cause-and-effect relationship with the children's progress but indicated that: (a) she socially organized the opportunities for children to construct knowledge about written language; (b) she deliberately set up zones of proximal development every time she authentically responded to the children's representation of meaning through their writing; and (c) she readily accepted all the children's conceptual interpretations of written language, thus creating a respect for each learner's knowledge and the opportunity for each learner/child to actively engage in the recreation of literacy knowledge in a mutually created social context within

school. This mutually created social context eventually became a natural avenue for communication.

In November, we again observed a dramatic shift. Only three children (one ES and two SS) were using the presyllabic writing system. In just two months the children's growing knowledge of written language had shifted toward becoming more alphabetic as evidenced by the eleven children (five SS and six ES) in the alphabetic category and thirteen children (four SS and nine ES) in the syllabic/alphabetic one. This dramatic shift indicated that children, given the opportunity to use and experiment with their working hypotheses, demonstrated their knowledge on a daily basis in a communicative social context, such as interactive dialogue journals. Since the beginning, the children had known that it was okay for them to write their own way. The most difficult children were those who had a "perfectionist" syndrome. By age five, they had assumed that in order to write anything they had to "spell" it exactly and correctly. Those types of children were the reluctant risk takers.

In December, fourteen children (six SS and eight ES) used the alphabetic writing system. This means that the children were writing more sound/letter correspondences guided by the alphabetic principle. It also means that the children integrated all the parts (the pragmatic, semantic, syntactic, and the graphophonemic cuing systems) within the whole so that they functioned and transacted at the adult cultural expectation. Although they were beginning to use standard orthography, for the most part they did not. Ferreiro and Teberosky (1982) claim that is the next difficult task for the children, but just figuring out the alphabetic writing system is short of a miracle. The other children were dispersed among the other writing systems. Eleven (five SS and six ES) were using the syllabic/alphabetic writing system whereas two Spanish speakers were using the syllabic writing system. The remaining three (two ES and one SS) were still using the presyllabic conceptual interpretation. In the fourth month of first grade this was a remarkable accomplishment for the children.

It is remarkable inasmuch as these children came from low to low-middle income families. Although their primary language was basically Spanish, some were bilingual in Spanish and English by first grade. It was also remarkable because their parents neither sat and wrote with them nor read storybooks to them on a regular basis. It is also noteworthy that traditionally first grade bilingual children are usually not given the opportunity to engage in their own construction of knowledge with writing and reading. Instead they are given handwriting exercises, words or sentences to copy from the board. Copying does not actively engage the children in learning how the alphabetic writing system works. This remarkable show of knowledge about the alphabetic writing system demonstrates that our children know more than we have previously assumed.

By January, twenty-three of the thirty first graders (ten SS and thirteen ES) were using the alphabetic writing system. As the scattergram indicates, the other seven fell into the syllabic (three SS and one ES) and syllabic/alphabetic (two SS and one ES) categories. The children didn't necessarily evolve from one writing system to another but indeed retreated to more comfortable and workable hypotheses or either "skipped" or used the other alternate writing systems available. During this month, both the teacher and the parents gained confidence in the children's learning capacities and renewed their respect for the children's construction of knowledge about this phenomenon we call literacy (reading and writing).

By February, in spite of the fact that three children fluctuated from the alphabetic to the syllabic/alphabetic writing system, four children who were using the syllabic writing system began using the syllabic/alphabetic (five SS and five ES). Ferreiro and Gomez Palacio (1982) noted that the children in their study also fluctuated between the alternative writing systems. By February, twenty children used the alphabetic writing system and ten used the syllabic/alphabetic writing system. This is indeed remarkable when compared to how we "taught" reading and writing using the status quo literacy and biliteracy curriculum.

In March, ninety percent of the children (twenty-seven out of thirty) were using the alphabetic writing system. All the Spanish speaking children (fifteen) and twelve of the English-speaking children were using the alphabetic writing system. Only three English-speaking children remain using the syllabic/alphabetic system. This is indeed quite an accomplishment for five and six-year-olds who basically came from low to low-middle socioeconomic levels and had been traditionally labeled "at risk" or "LEP."

In the months of April and May, all thirty bilingual children were using the alphabetic writing system. At this point, their conventional spelling also far exceeded their invented spelling. As previously stated, they were then faced with the task of learning how to spell conventionally since the alphabetic principle works only some of the time. It should also be noted that many of the children applied their alphabetic knowledge from their first language to the second language without having to "go through any teaching of skills."

Pedagogical Implications

There are several pedagogical implications that will significantly impact the way we teach and organize literacy learning for our bilingual children. The most salient deals with the teacher's knowledge about how children come to know written language by the praxis of the knowledge bases from the four paradigms of sociopsycholinguistics, sociocultural, psychogenetic, and

sociopolitical philosophy of learning and teaching. Second, these knowledge bases give the teacher the necessary understanding to restructure the social organization of the learning and teaching of literacy through mutually constructed social contexts (such as interactive dialogue journals). Third, this new knowledge challenges the status quo literacy and biliteracy curriculum and forces teachers to reevaluate their perceptions, beliefs, attitudes, assumptions, and practices about the traditional way of teaching literacy (reading and writing in L_1) and biliteracy (reading and writing in L_2). Fourth, by demonstrating how written language is used in the social context of authentic dialogue (Freire, 1970), we show that the children's acquisition of literacy knowledge will be facilitated and not impeded. Fifth, in the praxis of authentic dialogue, the children recreate knowledge about written language so that they are learning to read and write (that is, integrating and refining all the cuing systems — pragmatic, semantic, syntactic, and graphophonemic) in not only one language but two. Sixth, by deliberately setting up the context for authentic oral and written dialogue through interactive journals, the teacher is deliberately mediating knowledge through zones of proximal development. Seventh, these findings seriously raise questions about our status quo literacy and biliteracy curriculum. We must begin to shift our paradigms from an isolated skills approach to teaching reading and writing to a more holistic and authentic use of written language in our schools.

Last, by abandoning our traditional beliefs, practices and low expectations of bilingual first graders and replacing them with these new beliefs, understandings, knowledge, practices and expectations, we will restructure schooling so that all of our language minority (soon to be majority) children can successfully perform academically in literacy and biliteracy. By democratizing the learning and teaching of reading and writing, we have shifted the sociopolitical status of the children. In the status quo curriculum, literacy ability was the yardstick used to assign ability groups. But in <u>this</u> democratic milieu, <u>all</u> children are the haves. We no longer adhere to the "haves" and the "have nots." Most importantly, we no longer unknowingly participate in the structured subordination and humiliation of our bilingual children's academic achievement. Knowledge is power. What we must do is allow our children to demonstrate what they already know when they come to school. While our children are attending school, we must relearn <u>how</u> to facilitate their acquisition of knowledge — Querer es Poder.

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